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Peacebuilding Commission

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Second session

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 9 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Gaspar Martins ..... (Angola)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/2/OC/1)

1. **The Chairperson** drew attention to the provisional agenda contained in document PBC/2/OC/1.

2. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), supported by **Mr. Malhotra** (India), **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom), **Mr. Knyazev** (Russian Federation), **Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura** (Brazil), **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) and **Mr. Idoko** (Nigeria), questioned the need for an agenda for the whole session, which might act as a straightjacket, but noted that with the deletion of items 2 and 4 the provisional agenda would be suitable for the present meeting.

3. **The Secretary** explained that the provisional agenda, which had been endorsed by the Bureau, was a sessional agenda in line with the practice of many other subsidiary organs required to report to the parent body on an annual basis. Although the proposed agenda items should enable the Organizational Committee to conduct its work, adoption of the provisional agenda would not preclude the inclusion of other items in the course of the session.

4. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General, Peacebuilding Support Office) said that the Committee could certainly be master of its own procedures and decide on an agenda for each meeting, but there might be a value in having a sessional agenda as other General Assembly bodies did.

5. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the provisional agenda, with the deletion of items 2 and 4, as the agenda for its first meeting of the session and defer the question of a sessional agenda.

6. *The agenda, as orally amended, was adopted.*

Appointment of a chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission

7. **Ms. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) explained that, in accordance with rule 1 (c) of the provisional rules of procedure of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Chairperson or the Vice-Chairpersons should preside over the country-specific meetings, unless the Organizational Committee decided otherwise. The Bureau had therefore decided to propose to the Committee that the Chairperson should preside over the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration.

8. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that his delegation had no objection to the proposal, as long as it was understood that the decision ultimately rested in the hands of the Organizational Committee and not of the Bureau.

9. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Committee wished him to preside over the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Commission until such time as the Committee was in a position to appoint another chairperson. Discussions on the Burundi country-specific configuration were still ongoing and that question should be deferred.

10. *It was so decided.*

Requests submitted to the Organizational Committee

Requests received from Sweden and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to be invited to membership in the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration

11. **The Chairperson** recalled that he had received a letter dated 17 August 2006 in which Sweden requested an invitation to membership in the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration of the Commission.

12. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), supported by **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that his delegation was favourable to Sweden's participation but would like to emphasize the need for wider consultation with all members of the Organizational Committee.

13. **Mr. Malhotra** (India) suggested that, in future, it would be helpful if such requests were circulated in writing at least a day in advance of the meeting.

14. **Mr. Miller** (United States of America) said that he strongly supported the point made by the representative of India. The Committee was just at the beginning of the process of inviting relevant actors to be members of the country-specific configurations in accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 60/180, and it needed to establish a procedure for it. It would be useful to be able to make a decision on a comprehensive list of recommendations prepared by the Support Office for each country-

specific group, one that included all relevant actors. Such a list could be adjusted at need.

15. **The Chairperson** reminded members that such a list for the Sierra Leone configuration had been circulated at the meeting on 13 July 2006 (PBC/OC/1/SR.2). Sweden was asking to be added to that list.

16. **Mr. Antonio** (Angola) recalled that the matter had been brought up at informal consultations of the Committee the previous week and that those present had supported Sweden's request.

17. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan), supported by **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), said he understood that, pending a final decision on permanent participation, the Organization of the Islamic Conference had requested the opportunity to participate in the Sierra Leone country-specific meetings, and he hoped that request could be accommodated.

18. **The Chairperson** said he took it that the Committee wished to invite Sweden and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to membership in the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration.

19. *It was so decided.*

Requests received from the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to participate in all meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission

20. **The Chairperson** drew the Committee's attention to requests received from the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to participate in all meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 60/180 and of Security Council resolution 1645 (2005). Since the question was the subject of ongoing consultations, he would suggest that consideration of the matter should be deferred to a later date.

21. **Mr. Matussek** (Germany), explaining the rationale for the inclusion of the European Community in the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, said that European Union members had vested rights of sovereignty in the European Community in the framework of European integration. It had the status of a supranational organization and was an actor and donor in its own right. Indeed, it provided more than 50 per cent of official development assistance worldwide. Since the added value of the Peacebuilding Commission compared to earlier formats was that it aimed to include all relevant stakeholders, and since the European Community was one of the most important stakeholders worldwide, to exclude it from the Organizational Committee would run counter to the spirit and purpose of the Peacebuilding Commission.

22. **Mr. Mantovani** (Italy) pointed out that the European Union's request was based not only on paragraph 9 of the relevant resolutions: the Union also wished to participate in country-specific configurations under paragraph 7 (b) of General Assembly resolution 60/180 and of Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), which authorized the inclusion in country-specific meetings of representatives from "relevant regional and subregional organizations". If a decision must be deferred on general participation under paragraph 9, he saw no obstacle to a decision on the participation of the European Union in country-specific meetings under paragraph 7 (b).

23. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that he did not share Italy's interpretation of paragraph 7 (b) of the resolutions; in the context of the paragraph, which concerned country-specific meetings, regional organizations could only mean organizations of the region in question.

24. **Mr. Mantovani** (Italy), supported by **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom), said that his delegation fully supported the participation of African regional organizations in meetings concerning African countries. However, he hoped that the Committee could also make an effort to consider the European Union a relevant organization under paragraph 7 (b) of the relevant resolutions in view of its extensive involvement in relief efforts, development planning and programmes and conflict resolution.

25. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that his delegation was on record as being one of the first to support the participation of the European Union as an institutional donor in the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission under paragraph 9 of the relevant resolutions. It could also support the general participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. However, since it appeared that the Committee must defer a decision on the question of who should participate in the Organizational Committee, the members should be clear that for the

moment they were only considering participation in country-specific configurations.

26. **The Chairperson** recalled that the Committee had already agreed in consultations that the European Commission should be invited to participate in the Sierra Leone and Burundi country-specific meetings.

27. **Mr. Verbeke** (Belgium), **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau), **Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura** (Brazil) and **Mr. Deruffe** (France) pointed out that, although it had been agreed that the European Commission should be invited to participate, the participation of the European Union as such had not been clarified.

28. **The Chairperson** explained that the invitation to the European Commission left it free to determine the form of representation in its delegation. If it wished, through its own internal arrangements, to include representatives of the European Union, it could do so. The European Union could therefore participate in those country-specific meetings under the banner of the European Commission.

29. He took it that the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the requests of the European Community and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to participate in all meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission.

30. *It was so decided.*

Consultations with civil society organizations

31. **The Chairperson** said that, pursuant to paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Commission was encouraged to consult with civil society, non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate, informal consultations had been held to determine the most effective modus operandi for ensuring that country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission could benefit from the contribution of civil society. More time was required for such consultations. However, since the Commission would be holding its first country-specific meetings in a few days, he would suggest that the Committee should consider extending an invitation to Ms. Emma Kamara to participate in the Sierra Leone country-specific meeting on 12 October 2006, and Mr. Emmanuel Nshimirimana to participate in the Burundi country-specific meeting on 13 October 2006. The proposed representatives of civil society had been selected through an internal selection process in both countries, and the Governments of the two countries supported the proposal to invite them.

32. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that, in the absence of established precedent, it was important for the Committee to be clear on the course being followed. All members must be fully informed of the status and activities of the civil society represented and the standards to be met. If the representatives mentioned did in fact have the approval of the respective Governments, his delegation was predisposed to agree, but since the procedure was precedent-setting, he would like more information.

33. **Mr. Malhotra** (India) agreed with the representative of Pakistan and said that, no matter how extensive the consultations, the members of the Committee would need some information in writing, even if it were sent by e-mail. In the present case, his delegation could endorse the invitation but the procedure should not be taken as a precedent.

34. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that, like previous speakers, his delegation had no specific problem with the proposal, but thought that such a decision should be made on the basis of a formal application, and the consent of the Government concerned in the country-specific meeting should be obtained in writing. An exception could be made because of the imminence of the meetings but should not constitute a precedent. The Committee should proceed to develop the details and modalities of the participation of civil society, as indicated in rule 4 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Peacebuilding Commission.

35. **Mr. Miller** (United States of America), echoing the points made by the previous speakers, said that his delegation was concerned about the lack of transparency and lack of information. The idea seemed to be that there could be a generic representative of civil society, whereas in fact there might be a need for more than one to reflect the divergent views and contributions that civil society could provide.

36. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General, Peacebuilding Support Office) agreed that the failure to provide written information to the members of the Committee was a problem, but one that would be quickly corrected as the Peacebuilding Support Office got more staff in place. However, there was a more

fundamental problem, in that the members of the Committee held a wide range of views on the role that non-governmental organizations should play, and more debate was needed to clarify the guidelines. For example, often key assistance deliverers were groups based outside the country, yet there was a sense that it was more important to involve local civil society.

37. The proposal before the Committee for the two upcoming country-specific meetings had, in fact, come from local civil society groups themselves, who had come together to agree on the representatives mentioned. Ms. Kamara was programme coordinator for children's learning services in Sierra Leone and had been chosen by a peacebuilding working committee, which represented 10 civil society organizations in that country. Mr. Nshimirimana was the Burundi focal point for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict; he had been a principal organizer of the civil society consultations that had taken place in Burundi from 30 August to 1 September and had been chosen by vote in that consultation process. The information would be put in proper form and circulated to the members. The proposal was that, on an experimental basis, those representatives would make a presentation to the respective country-specific meeting.

38. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that the question of the involvement of civil society in the Peacebuilding Commission process deserved serious consideration. The Committee should not make decisions on an ad hoc basis but should devise comprehensive rules; the procedure followed for the upcoming meetings should not create a precedent. In particular, the Committee must decide at what stage it was most appropriate for civil society to be heard. When the Peacebuilding Commission was established, its membership had been deliberately limited to 31 so that it could function more efficiently. Therefore, any enlargement of the membership of the Organizational Committee itself should be approached with great caution. With regard to the participation of non-governmental organizations in country-specific meetings, the agreement of the particular Government concerned should be required; otherwise, the peacebuilding process could not work. His delegation would advocate a prudent, cautious approach.

39. **Mr. Majoor** (Netherlands) said that it was essential for the Commission to develop appropriate procedures to involve civil society and non-governmental organizations, particularly those on the ground, which had an important contribution to make. There were several ways in which they could be involved. As a beginning, he welcomed the participation by non-governmental organizations in the forthcoming country-specific meetings.

40. **Ms. Jenny** (United Kingdom) said that the concerns expressed by the representative of China were unfounded. There was no question of broadening the membership of the Commission. To invite representatives of civil society who had been approved by the Governments concerned, however, would constitute a flexible and constructive approach by the Commission.

41. **Mr. Ntakirutimana** (Burundi) said that his delegation strongly supported the participation of civil society, but it had not been sufficiently consulted about the non-governmental organization that was due to speak at the meeting on Burundi the following week. He doubted that a single non-governmental organization could represent the whole of civil society.

42. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that he was unaware of there having been any consultations at all. He wondered who had invited the non-governmental organization concerned for the meeting on Burundi. If the delegation of Burundi was reluctant to accept the participation of non-governmental organizations, the Commission should restrict their participation to an informal presentation the previous day.

43. **The Chairman** said that consultations had taken place with the non-governmental organizations in Burundi and Sierra Leone with the full approval of the Governments concerned. Such participation need not constitute a precedent: according to rule 4 (b) of the provisional rules of procedure (PBC/1/OC/3), consultation took place "as appropriate". Moreover, according to rule 6, the provisional rules of procedure would be "reviewed in the light of the practical work of the Commission, as necessary".

44. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the Commission was fully entitled to consult anyone it wished: not just non-governmental organizations but representatives of the private sector or the members of a country's political opposition.

45. **Mr. Majoor** (Netherlands) proposed that the Committee should proceed on the basis that non-governmental organizations should be invited to the

two country-specific meetings the following week, on the understanding that no precedent was being set.

46. **Mr. Malhotra** (India) said that, for his delegation, a briefing by non-governmental organizations prior to a country-specific meeting would suffice. Having issued an invitation in the case of the meetings on Burundi and Sierra Leone, the Commission must clearly honour those invitations. In future, however, it should take account of the concerns of the country under consideration.

47. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that his delegation would agree to the proposal by the representative of the Netherlands, so long as agreement was received in writing from the Government of Burundi. In future, non-governmental organization appearances should be restricted to briefings beforehand.

48. **Ms. Gallardo Hernández** (El Salvador) said that any action taken by the Commission would set the tone for future work. In her view, the Commission should therefore establish a procedure, at the outset, of holding regular consultations with non-governmental organizations and civil society.

49. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that he supported the Netherlands proposal, as amended by Egypt. He also supported the view expressed by the representative of India that, in future, the Commission's meetings should be kept separate from consultations with non-governmental organizations and civil society.

50. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposal by the representative of the Netherlands, as amended by the representative of Egypt.

51. *It was so decided.*

52. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) asked whether the meeting was a public or closed meeting.

53. **Ms. McAskie** (Assistant Secretary-General, Peacebuilding Support Office) said that, as to whether a meeting was public or closed, in the future it could be assumed to be closed, unless the Committee indicated otherwise; alternatively, the Secretariat could hold consultations before every meeting to establish its status.

54. **Mr. Majoor** (Netherlands) said that as a rule, a meeting should be public unless a specific decision was taken that it should be closed.

55. **Mr. Knyazev** (Russian Federation) said that in future the question of whether a meeting should be public or closed should be decided by the membership as a whole.

56. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) said that whether a body held closed or public meetings depended on the nature of its discussions. Since the rules of procedure stated that meetings would be held "in public or private, as appropriate", there were clearly no ground rules, as the representative of the Netherlands had suggested. In his view, half a day, or even a whole day, should be given over to non-governmental organizations, after which the Commission should hold a private meeting.

57. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) said that the members were currently meeting as the Organizational Committee and the meeting was therefore clearly private. Meetings of the full Commission, however, should be public.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.